

The Comprehensive Plan Provides the Cornerstone for the Entire South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Effort

Getting the water right is the critical part of restoring the south Florida ecosystem. The Comprehensive Plan will do this, and its benefits are not dependent on other efforts. But the Comprehensive Plan is also part of a larger effort to restore the ecosystem and provide for a sustainable south Florida. A strategic plan for this larger effort is being developed under the direction of the South Florida Ecosystem Task Force by federal, state, local and tribal leaders. It will focus on bringing together other restoration efforts under one framework. Over 200 projects will be tied together under the strategic plan.

Getting the water right. The Comprehensive Plan is the cornerstone of getting the water right because it addresses the problem on a regional basis. There are, however, other Corps projects of a more limited scope that

work toward restoring and enhancing the natural system. The Corps recently began the restoration of the Kissimmee River that will return the natural areas of the river and improve wildlife habitat in the northern part of the greater Everglades system. Two other projects are underway to return water flows to Everglades National Park through Shark River and Taylor Sloughs, two historically important water “channels” for the River of Grass.

State and local efforts also address water. Water quality problems are being addressed by the state through the multi-step Everglades Construction Project that uses wetlands for stormwater treatment areas and encourages best management practices to reduce pollutants in runoff from cities and farms. The South Florida Water Management





Pumping facility under construction adjacent to Everglades National Park

District is also developing regional and sub-regional water supply plans to provide for better water resources management.

Restoring and enhancing the natural system. Efforts to restore and enhance the natural environment are also taking place at the region-wide level as well as on a smaller scope. These efforts focus on two primary components: species diversity and habitat protection. For example, the Multi-Species Recovery Plan, developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, provides a comprehensive strategy to address habitat needs of the 68 endangered species in the area. Another example, the Corps' Environmental Impact Statement for Southwest Florida, will provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating future requests for development permits.

Transforming the built environment is another goal of the overall restoration effort. Growth issues are being addressed at the state and local level. Efforts to balance growth and resource protection, as well as efforts to enhance the quality of life in urban

areas are all important to the overall ecosystem. The Florida initiative Eastward Ho! will redirect future development into the historical eastern corridor, revitalizing older urban areas. The broad effort by Miami-Dade County to address land use and water management will determine the future economic, social, and environmental sustainability for most of urban and rural Miami-Dade County. The joint State and Corps effort under the Florida Keys Carrying Capacity Study will provide an information base for managers to make decisions about balancing economic and environmental needs.

Efforts by federal, state, local and tribal entities represent the commitment of all to have a comprehensive and integrated strategic plan to achieve restoration and sustainability. The Comprehensive Plan complements these efforts.